

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 077925
ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 PM-05 DODE-00 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 SS-15 L-03 AID-05
MCE-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-12 EB-08 PA-01 /083 R

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APPROVED BY NEA - ALFRED L. ATHERTON, JR.
EUR/NE:RWOODS

-----000469 252335Z /62

O P 252323Z MAR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 077925

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SW, IN

SUBJECT: SWEDISH AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY
ATHERTON: VIGGEN SALE TO INDIA

REF: STATE 74389

1. SWEDISH AMBASSADOR 'ACHTMEISTER CALLED ON NEA
ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON MARCH 24 TO REVIEW QUESTION
OF U.S. APPROVAL FOR SALE OF VIGGEN TO INDIA (REFTEL).
WACHTMEISTER STATED THAT THE INDIANS HAD INFORMED THE
SWEDES THAT THEY WERE GIVING PURCHASE OF THE VIGGEN FULL
AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. HOWEVER, IN ORDER TO CONSIDER
MAKING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET THE INDIANS NEEDED
TO KNOW WHETHER THE U.S. WAS PREPARED TO GRANT AN EX-
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 STATE 077925

PEDITIOUS APPROVAL TO THE SALE OF THE U.S. COMPONENTS
OF THE VIGGEN- WACHTMEISTER AGAIN NOTED THE IMPORTANCE
OF A SALE TO INDIA TO THE SWEDISH AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY.
HE UNDERScored SWEDISH SUPPORT FOR STRICT EXPORT RULES
BUT STATED THAT THE GOS WAS PREPARED TO APPROVE A VIGGEN
SALE BECAUSE OF INDIA'S DEMOCRATIC STATUS AND FACT THAT
INDIA HAS MADE DECISION TO ACQUIRE SUCH AIRCRAFT FROM SOME

SOURCE IN ANY CASE.

2. IN RESPONSE, ATHERTON NOTED THAT U.S. SOUTH ASIAN ARMS

SALES POLICY WAS CLEARLY DEFINED AND PREDATED BY SOME YEARS CURRENT GLOBAL ARMS TRANSFER GUIDELINES. ATHERTON REVIEWED THE 1975 U.S. DECISION TO RELAX THE PREVIOUS EMBARGO ON THE SALE OF LETHAL WEAPONS BUT TO LIMIT THESE TO CLEARLY DEFENSIVE WEAPONS SYSTEMS WHICH DID NOT RAISE THE LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGICAL SOPHISTICATION IN THE REGION. UNDER THIS POLICY THE U.S. HAD DECIDED NOT TO SELL THE A-7 TO PAKISTAN IN SPITE OF STRONG COMPANY AND CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE, THUS FOREGOING A DOLS 700 MILLION SALE. WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE REGIONAL IMPACT OF SUCH SALES AND THEIR POTENTIAL FOR TRIGGERING AN ARMS RACE. ATHERTON STATED THAT WE HOPE THE INDIANS WILL NOT BUY AN AIRCRAFT OF THE TYPE REPRESENTED BY THE A-7 AND THE VIGGEN AS INEVITABLY THE PAKISTANIS WOULD SEEK TO ACQUIRE SOMETHING COMPARABLE. TO THESE REGIONAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS MUST BE FACTORED IN OUR GLOBAL CONSTRAINTS RELATING TO THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW SYSTEMS INTO THE REGION AND COPRODUCTION ARRANGEMENTS, AS WELL AS THE LIKELY DOMESTIC REACTION FROM THOSE WHO SUPPORTED THE SALE OF THE A-7.

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PAGE 03 STATE 077925

3. RESPONDING TO WACHTMEISTER'S OBSERVATION THAT THE INDIANS ARE LIKELY TO BUY AN ADVANCED AIRCRAFT REGARDLESS OF THE U.S. RESPONSE TO SWEDEN, AND IN ADDITION THAT THE INDIANS ARE SEEKING TO LESSEN THEIR DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIETS FOR SUCH AIRCRAFT, ATHERTON STATED THAT WE APPRECIATED THE DILEMMAS. HE STRESSED THE U.S. INTEREST IN GOOD RELATIONS WITH SWEDEN AS WELL AS OUR INTEREST IN STRONGER INDIAN TIES TO THE WEST. NEVERTHELESS, ANY DECISION FAVORABLE TO THE VIGGEN WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT GIVEN THE ADMINISTRATION'S STRONG VIEWS ON ARMS TRANSFER AND PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL SENSITIVITY ON THIS ISSUE. HE POINTED TO THE ANALOGOUS DECISION BY THE ADMINISTRATION SOME MONTHS AGO TO TURN DOWN AN EQUALLY STRONG ISRAELI REQUEST TO APPROVE THE SALE TO ECUADOR OF THE ISRAELI-BUILT (WITH U.S. EQUIPMENT) KFIR AIRCRAFT FOR MANY OF THE CONSIDERATIONS ARISING OUT OF A VIGGEN SALE TO INDIA.

4. ATHERTON CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT A FINAL DECISION WOULD BE MADE AT A HIGHER LEVEL AND THAT THE SWEDISH CASE WOULD BE REVIEWED WITH A FULL AWARENESS OF SWEDISH INTERESTS AND A FAIR JUDGMENT WOULD BE MADE. ATHERTON

ADMITTED CANDIDLY, HOWEVER, THAT THE ODDS FOR U.S.
APPROVAL OF THE SALE OF THE VIGGEN TO INDIA WERE NOT
GOOD. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MILITARY SALES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE077925
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AATHIBAULT, JR/HLK
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780132-0328
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780324/aaaaauex.tel
Line Count: 119
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 96cf12bd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 74389
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3201234
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SWEDISH AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON: VIGGEN SALE TO INDIA
TAGS: MASS, SW, IN, US
To: STOCKHOLM
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/96cf12bd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014